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Cuban Prisoners Stayed United Against Reds

CPYRGHT

MIAMI, Fla., Dec. 26 (AP).—Were there any turncoats among the Cuban invasion prisoners?

The question is prominent in the minds of many who remembered the startlingly high number of American prisoners in Korea who collaborated in one way or another with the Communists.

Judging from the comments of the returned Cuban prisoners themselves, there was no such collaboration in the Cuban Communist jails where the invasion prisoners were held for 20 months.

"We stuck together. We kept each other's morale up," said Raoul Arango Kindlain.

He was among the 1,113 prisoners who returned to freedom in the two-day, 10-plane Operation Ransom, which was completed in the waning hours of Christmas eve.

"I never heard of a single man who had anything to do with the Communists," said Luis Entralgo.

Made Miserable

Apparently the Communists made no serious effort to brainwash any of the men, although they did attempt to make them as miserable as possible.

"They didn't attack us physically," said Humberto Sanchez. "They worked on our minds, to humiliate and upset us."

Edgardo Buttari said this included changing meal hours widely from day to day and occasionally dousing naked prisoners with cold water and tossing them back into their cells in the middle of the night.

"And a little bowl of macaroni for dinner for 95 straight days," said Mr. Arango.

Prime Minister Fidel Castro took some of the prisoners on television. He asked Alberto Carrello, a Negro, why a colored person would want to invade the island, since colored people now were welcome there.

Mr. Castro told Mr. Carrello he could swim in country club pools and was welcome in all the hotels.

"Came to Fight Reds"

Mr. Carrello shouted back, before the national audience: "I didn't come here to swim in pools. I came to fight communism."

After a few such exchanges, there were no concerted efforts to convert the prisoners from their anti-communism. An effort to separate them into income groups, with privileges for the lowest income men, failed.

"We refused to accept anything for one group that wouldn't be given to all," said Mr. Buttari.

Instead, the campaign drove the men closer together. Mr. Castro helped by lumping them as "yellow worms," and issuing them all yellow cotton shirts to wear. The men adopted them as their symbol of opposition.

Observers pointed out that

Mr. Castro and his advisers had a built-in contempt for the bulk of the prisoners, who represent old, wealthy, Spanish families.

"It was like capturing the entire Havana Yacht Club," one observer said. "Castro doesn't like or understand these people."

It was likely that Mr. Castro's feeling that many of the prisoners represented the wealthy class of Cubans led him to set a price on their heads. He listed them at prices from \$25,000 to \$500,000.

"That only united us," said Mr. Arango.